The California Interactive Broadband Map

The California Interactive Broadband Map is a tool for California citizens to find and investigate broadband services in their area. The map displays all of the broadband providers offering service within the area around a particular address. The data currently displayed represents the situation as of June 30, 2013. The map will be updated approximately every six months.

This map was created by the team efforts of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Video Franchise / Broadband Deployment Group and the California State University Chico Research Foundation through a grant from the State Broadband Initiative (SBI) Grant Program. In 2009 Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger designated the CPUC as the single California entity eligible to receive the grant which is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The grant program is administered by the Department of Commerce through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). The data collected for the California interactive map also goes into the National Broadband Map.

How are the broadband data used? There are a number of uses for the information we are collecting and mapping. A primary use is for California residents to be able to access information about the broadband services available to them, and to make them better informed consumers. Equally important, our broadband information is used to inform public policies intended to make sure broadband is available throughout California, and to promote digital literacy and broadband usage. Data collected by the CPUC is also used by the federal government for the same policy purposes.

What exactly is broadband? The broadband information we collect is determined by NTIA's Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) July 8, 2009 which defines broadband as a "two-way data transmission to and from the Internet with advertised speeds of at least 768 kilobits per second (kbps) downstream and at least 200 kbps upstream to end users." Further, only when new service requests can be provisioned within a normal service interval of 10 days or fewer is service considered "available." Thus, most business services are not represented on the map, as they generally take longer to be provisioned.

What data is collected? Pursuant to the NOFA, the CPUC collects certain data from broadband providers in California including the availability of broadband services, the technology used to provide them, and the maximum advertised speeds at which broadband services are offered. The CPUC began collecting the data in 2009 and will collect it twice yearly for the term of the Grant Program which runs through September, 2014.

We separate broadband services into several categories: fixed, mobile, and satellite. The "fixed" category includes all those services which are delivered to a particular, stationary location. Such services are provided using several different technologies, including "wireline" technologies such as xDSL, Cable Modem, or Fiber to the Home. These technologies use wires or cables that make a physical connection from the provider to the user. "Fixed wireless" solutions use wireless radio waves at a particular frequency, such as Wi-Fi, to make a "point-to-point" connection between the provider and the user at a fixed location. By contrast "mobile" includes technologies, such as 3G, 4G, and LTE to provide service to users who can receive a broadband

signal while the user is in motion. The “satellite” category includes those providers who use a connection via satellite to the customer to provide service. Each technology has its own speed and quality characteristics. The best solution for any individual depends on availability, speed, whether mobility is required, and a host of other factors, including price.

How is the data collected? The CPUC issues a Data Request twice yearly to California broadband providers. The data then undergoes various quality checks to make sure they are valid and to format them properly for display and analysis. Once this process is complete, the CPUC displays the information on the Interactive Map. In addition, we forward the data to the NTIA, which uses them for the National Broadband Inventory Map. The data request, record formats, and other information can be found on the State Broadband Mapping Program webpage.

How accurate is the map’s representation of broadband availability? It is important to understand that the map is not accurate down to the individual household. Rather, the map uses the smallest geographic area established by the U.S. Census Bureau – the “census block.” Wireline data is collected at the census block level for census blocks 2 square miles or smaller. For larger census blocks, we collect data at the road segment level. So, if the census block (or portion of a street) in which you live is shown as served, that means there is service somewhere by at least one provider that includes at least one address in the same census block (or street segment) in which you live. The map will provide a link to the web site of each provider in the area so that you can further research the availability, speed, quality and prices of service available to you.

Disclaimer: While every effort has been made to produce an interactive map that is both accurate and current, it is possible that some information might not reflect actual available broadband service. The map is a very good starting point, but neither the CPUC nor the providers can warrant the accuracy of the data. Because of this, the map may show service available within a given census block although not all addresses within that census block to have access to the service. Other factors such as hills or foliage may affect wireless broadband access in certain areas even though service is shown to be available. Finally, while we show satellite providers available throughout the state, the ability to receive a usable signal at any given location will depend on having a direct view of the sky where the satellite orbits.

Optional Survey. The map gives you the opportunity to give us feedback about broadband service at your location. We urge you to join us in making improvements to the map by providing us with more information through your participation.